

Chapter 181: The Highlight of Zhou Tianshen's Life

The Slaughter Cape.

Xu Xiaoshou crossed his arms at his chest and looked at the puppet child that was doing the same. He then asked with a doubtful tone.

“What do they call you?”

“Jie...”

A shy voice was heard, yet it was no longer saying the word ‘Mama’ before and had said something else instead.

Xu Xiaoshou was delightfully surprised, noting that the child actually knew other words. While it was just a name, yet it was making progress.

“Little Jie, I, Xu Xiaoshou hereby extend my invitation again to you. Do you want to come with Mama?” The young man said, trying to puzzle the thing.

After the Sky Tree took form, the Tianxuan Gate was finally stabilized.

Yet, Xu Xiaoshou dared not stay for a moment longer. He wanted to get back to the portal and leave as soon as possible.

However, he needed to see to the matter with Jie the puppet child before that.

If the puppet child proved to be obedient and controllable, then it would definitely be a formidable weapon and it would do him more good than harm.

However, he wasn't sure if that thing would actually behave. As such, if it was proven not feasible, he wouldn't force it.

He already had a ‘Raging Giant’ which he had trouble containing and if he were to put yet another time bomb by his side, it would only be a matter of time before things go south.

“Mama...”

Jie's voice sounded hesitant.

Repeated tests showed that he was indeed able to detect the child's emotional fluctuations through ‘Sense’, which was one of the reasons why he dared to try to control such a devastating weapon.

“There isn't much time for you to think about it, as I'm about to leave soon. If I were to stay here any longer, I'd probably be trapped in here.”

He looked up at the sky. “You see this world? While it's patching up, yet it's actually no different from that hole that trapped you. You just have more space out there, that's all.”

“The true world lies outside...”

He halted as he recalled what Elder Sang said all of the sudden, that puzzling theory about the world.

He thought that perhaps even that world outside wasn't actually the true world.

"Mama..." Jie looked at him and seemed to be moved.

Xu Xiaoshou didn't mull over the matter too much and flashed a beaming, relieved smile, saying, "the point of living is to see a greater, wider world out there, right? What's the point of keeping oneself trapped in a dinghy place, eh?"

Jie walked up to him and was no longer crossing its arms. It put its arms on Xu Xiaoshou's shoulder and nodded.

"Mama."

Xu Xiaoshou wore a twisted expression as he felt as if his shoulder blades were about to crack. He hissed and said, "Alright, alright, I know what you mean, just let go for now and don't do anything rash."

Jie looked up and doubt was seen in its red eyes.

"Let... let go! Release your arms and do it like me. Cross your arms!"

The corner of his mouth twitched and he was feeling not alright at all.

Go**damit, if I were to take this thing outside, it'd still be fine if it just come and pinch me somewhat, but if this thing were to play with other kids and got riled up...

"Let's kick ball, eh?"

"Yippee!"

The head flew...

"Wuuuu, you killed the friend!"

"Alright, easy there. Let's hug."

The person shattered...

Xu Xiaoshou was feeling his legs wobbling, not daring to imagine the scene any further. If Jie were to not be able to control its own powers, there would definitely be trouble once they got outside.

He rather regretted his decision of extending such an invitation.

"If you're going out with me, then we'd need to set up rules."

Xu Xiaoshou crossed his arms before his chest all the time. Jie finally regained composure and imitated what he did.

"First, you couldn't go about attacking people."

Jie nodded.

"Second, unless I say otherwise, you'd need to stand with your arms crossed before your chest. This is utmost important."

Jie nodded again.

“Finally...”

Xu Xiaoshou paused, wondering if that thing actually understood what he said.

He wondered what would happen if that thing were to simply nod without actually comprehending what he said.

“Could you shrink yourself?” He asked.

A puppet could probably shrink and hide itself, and if it were to be capable of doing so, taking it outside would be a piece of cake.

Jie nodded.

Xu Xiaoshou was delighted and gave his order. “Shrink!”

Jie continued to nod.

“...”

Xu Xiaoshou was feeling a massive headache by then, noting that the puppet was indeed more like a loose cannon.

Pop!

The puppet that had been the size of a child shrunk itself into a metal ball about the size of a fist all of a sudden, hovering midair.

Xu Xiaoshou’s eyes glittered, noting that the puppet could actually do so.

Good lord, you really know how to please me. Who the hell would find out if I were to just hide this piece of rock on my person, eh?

He grabbed hold of the ball and asked, “could you talk?”

“Mama...”

There were two red dots at the top of the ball, which should be where the eyes were.

“Nice. Unless told otherwise, you shall in this form at all times...”

The metal ball popped before he finished and Jie reappeared in puppet form again.

Okay, you’re not listening to me, eh?

Xu Xiaoshou was stunned and thought that the thing was going to be quite a handful. He was most wary of things that had erratic behaviors, as that meant that they would tend to go haywire at key moments.

At that moment, a shout was heard not far away.

“Xu Xiaoshou, come out and meet your doom!”

It was obvious that it was Zhou Tianshen’s voice.

Okay, it's doing this because someone's here eh... yet before Xu Xiaoshou was able to feel relieved, his eyes were thrown wide open, as Jie was nowhere to be seen.

There was no need to speculate where that puppet ended up at all.

"Stop, that's not the enemy! Do not attack!" Xu Xiaoshou shouted to the top of his lungs. His Sense was locked at Zhou Tianshen's position as he took to the air.

"Remember the rules!"

Zhou Tianshen sensed movement behind his neck and turned around to find a child clenching its fist.

"Huh? There're survivors in this world?"

He was pleased yet he was all furious when he heard Xu Xiaoshou's voice, "So, you're with Xu Xiaoshou then?"

"You align yourself with evil to wreck the world, now die... well, this is a child. Damn it, how do I go about this..."

That stout man cradled his blade and hesitated. He wasn't one to kill a child.

Xu Xiaoshou got there and Zhou Tianshen's eyes glittered with anger again. I'd just go about getting rid of the one responsible then.

"Xu Xiaoshou, you shall die on this very day!"

His piercing killing intent was every bit on par with that metal puppet from before. Xu Xiaoshou noted the shifting look in Jie's eyes behind and stopped the puppet right away, "don't do anything rash!"

"Huh, rash?"

"I, Zhou Tianshen, am not doing anything rash because I'm about to kill you!"

Xu Xiaoshou felt like he was about to fall over, noting that the man before him was still steeped in a fantasy world.

Now is not the time for jokes, man.

"Quit yapping. This is the Tianxuan Gate and I'm sorry that I lied to you, about taking 10000 years and all..."

"By the way, you actually recovered that quickly? You could come out already?"

Xu Xiaoshou noted that his 'Amber Juice' was indeed doing wonders.

"Hmph, you think that a black wall could trap me?" That stout man snorted dismissively and recalled that something was off all of a sudden, saying, "Lied? You're trying to dupe me?"

Doubted, Passive Points +1.

Xu Xiaoshou felt like he was about to pass out, thinking that the man believed everything when he should have had doubts, yet go about doubting things when it was time to believe.

Zhou Tianshen drew his blade. He had no intentions of saying more to the man who wrecked the world. He reckoned that it had been quite a pity, having seen that man before his eyes to be his guide 10000 years ago, never knowing that the man had such ulterior motives.

“Come, let us duel to the death!”

Whoosh!

That puppet child appeared before Xu Xiaoshou again, standing between the two of them.

Zhou Tianshen was furious. “Do not think for a second that I wouldn’t kill you just because you’re a child. Get out of my way!”

That shout caused Xu Xiaoshou’s heart to race. Damn, this really is the highlight of your life, Sir Zhou, even I, Xu Xiaoshou, wouldn’t dare to talk to the kid like that...

Boom!

Jie grabbed Zhou Tianshen’s blade as expected, throwing both the man and the blade so high into the sky that they became like stars.

Bling!

The man was gone before shrieks were even heard.

A passage appeared coincidentally and that stout man just happened to fall into that right afterwards.

Xu Xiaoshou was speechless.

Chapter 182: Goodbye, Tianxuan Gate!

“I sure hope the guy survives this...” Xu Xiaoshou prayed inwardly.

“Well, I guess it serves him right for daring to mess with Jie here. Seems like he doesn’t quite get the concept of ‘never judge a book by its cover.’”

After seeing Zhou Tianshen disappear inside the portal, Xu Xiaoshou was feeling rather flattered.

“That thing opened right here to pick me up instead of appearing somewhere near the gate, huh?” he thought. “Is this some kind of reward for those who go out of their way to get things done?”

“Jie!” Xu Xiaoshou looked at the puppet child, and his mouth twitched for a bit. “We’re leaving.”

Jie looked at the portal, a flicker of doubt in its eyes. “Mama...”

“Shrink!” Xu Xiaoshou didn’t bother yapping with it. Judging from the information he’d learned earlier, it would be very difficult to maintain that portal, even if it was Ye Xiaotian doing it.

Jie hesitated briefly before shrinking into a metal ball and hovering over to him. Xu Xiaoshou immediately grabbed hold of it.

“Remember. After we get outside, do your best not to take your original form in places with lots of people. Only attack when I give the order.

“Don’t go about stirring trouble, understand?”

The two red dots on the ball flickered, and Xu Xiaoshou nodded with satisfaction, yet he nonetheless had to add, “If you do something wrong and get sent here again, I won’t be able to do anything to save you.”

“Mama...”

“Be a good boy, and I’ll get you a girlfriend someday.”

“...”

The metal ball didn’t respond. Xu Xiaoshou stuffed the metal ball into his shirt and flew toward the portal and walked into it.

There was a flicker of light, and he disappeared.

The Tianxuan Gate was finally quiet again.

It’d only taken two days for the situation to go from abundant spiritual energy to looking like it was doomsday. He wondered what would’ve happened if the place had stayed like that for one more day.

It was fortunate that the Sky Tree had been sent there in time and that he did his best to salvage the world.

All in all, everything had turned out fine in the end.

With the exception of some poor, lost dude, and those world-stabilizing treasures that had been lost...

Whooshh.

The winds howled, and it started to snow again. The sky was patching together, and the world seemed to be on the right path again.

...

The portal flickered, then flashed in the Council Hall.

“Hahaha, I, Xu Xiaoshou, am finally home!”

He was slightly disoriented, yet he recovered by just shaking his head for a bit and opened his arms to hug the sun that was setting in the mountains.

Watched, Passive Points +472.

“Holy sh**!” he thought.

He was immediately startled, feeling rather dazed by the fact that he was being watched, yet the corners of his mouth couldn’t help but twitch when he saw the three digits behind the notification.

“I’m still best suited to places with lots of people, after all.” he thought. “Having just that little sister cursing me all the time would not only cause a slow increase in passive points but would probably get me in deep sh*t if one of those curses actually worked.”

There were hundreds of men in black below starting at him intently. The faces were rather familiar.

“Huh?”

“All those people just to pick me up?” he thought.

There was a peculiar expression on his face as he recalled a certain scene, wanting to say something like “I shall rule over all from here on out,” but he suppressed the impulse in the end.

His eyes roamed over the scene, and he saw the others from the Tianxuan Gate at a pavilion elsewhere. They all made it out.

He then turned his attention to the steps. The dean, Elder Qiao, and what was that...

“Oh sh**,” he thought. “That girl really is something else altogether. At the very least, she’s at the pinnacle of Innate Level like Luo Leilei.

“Hmm. But if she’s suppressing her powers, that would most likely mean she’s actually at Master Level.

“And that one... that’s her dad, eh? His power level should be at Sovereign Level, around the level of the dean.”

His view had broadened considerably at present. Furthermore, with his “Sense” leveled up, he could now basically accurately tell the level of anyone he met, so long as it wasn’t someone like that grey mist figure.

“Ma...”

Ehem!

There was a soft cry from inside his robes all of a sudden, and Xu Xiaoshou immediately coughed several times to mask it.

“Ma... good boy, don’t go about talking when you’re not supposed to.”

He almost ended up cursing right there and then, yet it would be inconvenient of him to do so, seeing how many out there were watching. As such, he went about trying to communicate with that metal ball telepathically.

He didn’t know if it worked, but at least Jie was silent.

Everyone had initially turned their eyes away from Xu Xiaoshou, waiting for the last person to emerge, but Xu Xiaoshou’s coughing attracted their attention again.

The young man hovering midair was growing rather uncomfortable from being watched like this again. He flicked his robe and said, “What are you all looking at? Never seen a handsome guy before?”

Doubted, Passive Points +472.

The very disciplined hundreds of men in black under the pagoda tree got somewhat riled up by that one man in the air.

“Hehehe...” Yu Zhiwen covered her mouth and chuckled. “This guy sure is bold, daring to joke before so many people. He really is a lot better than the few who were trembling with fear before.”

“Joke?”

Despite the girl having lowered her voice, Xu Xiaoshou was able to hear her all the same. He turned to look at her and added seriously, “Do I look like I’m joking?”

Yu Zhiwen was speechless.

Cursed, Passive Points +1.

“You’re interesting.” She’d never met someone so shameless before.

“Heh, you’re not being honest, woman!” he thought.

Xu Xiaoshou turned his attention away from the Information Bar and added with sincerity, “Thank you. your eyes look very pretty.”

“Who doesn’t know cheap flattery, eh?” he thought.

But then again, that wasn’t actually just flattery. He noted that the girl’s eyes looked like they had stars in them. They were very bright, very dazzling, and very charming.

Yu Zhiwen blushed a little, but fortunately, her veil covered enough of her face to conceal it. She turned her head around and said nothing else.

She’d met a lot of dashing men before, and quite a few had expressed their love and admiration for her, but none had spoken to her like this.

She was unable to come up with a comeback and could only stay silent for the time being.

Xu Xiaoshou was feeling amused, yet his grin froze the very next second.

Cursed, Passive Points +1, +1, +1, +1...

Man, just how dishonest could the girl get?

Looking embarrassed on the outside and cursing like mad deep down?

Wait, hold on...

The frequency of the curses...

He turned his attention to the pavilion back there. Some Inner Yard participants had emerged earlier, guarded by a group of men in black. Mu Zixi was among them.

“What?”

The girl innocently blinked her large eyes when Xu Xiaoshou’s eyes locked onto her own.

Xu Xiaoshou checked the Information Bar again.

Cursed, Passive Points +1, +1, +1, +1...

“...”

“Well, no one can curse like you. I guess I have a lunatic for a little sister indeed,” he thought.

Everyone saw him slowly descend from the sky, feeling that something was off with him, but they couldn't say what.

Qiao Qianzhi was the first one to note his peculiarity and asked, feeling surprised, “Xu Xiaoshou, you've broken into Innate Level, eh?”

Everyone was stunned. It was only then that they recalled that Xu Xiaoshou had only been at Spiritual Cultivation level nine before entering the Tianxuan Gate.

That meant he'd made a breakthrough first into level 10 and then into Innate Levels in just two days. Furthermore, despite being at early Origin Court Level, it didn't seem like the ordinary early Origin Court Level...

His training seemed to have solidified his cultivation foundation, and he looked like he could break into the middle stages of Origin Court at any moment.

“Oh, h*ll...”

Doubted, Passive Points +472.

Doubted, Passive Points +365.

“...”

Xu Xiaoshou was very pleased. This was why he liked places with many people, as those people would always end up racking up a lot of Passive Points for him.

Despite having shown up mere moments before, he'd already racked in nearly 2000 points.

“Yeah, I'm at Innate Levels now.”

He flapped his sleeves, behaving as if he were invincible.

He'd had a dream a while back, and that dream was going to a place with 10000 people and shouting “I'm at Innate Level,” then racking up 10000 points from doing just that.

At that time, he'd been worried people would gang up on him and pummel him to death just for doing that. It didn't take long for that dream to be reduced to something that could never be realized.

It was indeed a pity.

Qiao Qianzhi noted Xu Xiaoshou's smug look and couldn't help but flash a grin at him. “Hahahahahaha... hmm, looks like you've gained quite a lot in the Tianxuan Gate, then.”

Gain?

He couldn't help but cradle his chest as he recalled the 28000 passive points he'd gotten at the Black Waterfalls and the three treasures currently with him.

Well, not quite. Counting Jie, he'd gotten four treasures.

He landed with a tap, feeling solid ground under his feet. There was an uncontrollable grin on his face.

“Well, when it comes to gains, I did gain quite a lot...”

Chapter 183: Xu Xiaoshou, Could You Stop Yapping!

“Where’s Yuan Tou?”

Ye Xiaotian was obviously nearing his limit, yet the two portals didn’t show any signs of wavering at all, even though he’d been holding them for quite a long time.

Xu Xiaoshou saw everyone looking at him and simply shrugged indifferently. “How should I know? Maybe he’s lost, that guy...”

He and Yuan Tou had never been on good terms to being with, and everyone knew that, so his response was expected.

Qiao Qianzhi glanced at him suspiciously, but said nothing else in the end.

There was no evidence confirming if Yuan Tou was truly dead, yet as one of the veterans from the Inner Yard, there was no way he hadn’t sensed the changes inside the Tianxuan Gate.

His not having appeared at that moment itself already said that there was a problem.

“How about...”

“We’ll wait a little longer.” Ye Xiaotian cut Qiao Qianzhi off. He severed the portal linking the Slaughter Cape and devoted his powers to maintaining the other portal.

Xu Xiaoshou shrugged indifferently again. There was no way he would say more to that.

He had already given that fellow an opportunity, and it had nothing to do with him and that man had been unable to seize it.

It was rather unfortunate that the dean’s efforts would definitely end up wasted, getting nothing in return.

“That, umm...”

Xu Xiaoshou wanted to say something, but hesitated.

He actually wanted to check on Zhou Tianshen’s injuries, but the man was surrounded by those men in black at the pavilion. He could tell that Zhou Tianshen’s injuries weren’t fatal, but the man was still unconscious.

It became apparent that Jie’s attack was something that no one without Master Physique would be able to withstand.

As for the pavilion...

Everyone else who’d been inside the Tianxuan Gate before and had already emerged were there but him.

Xu Xiaoshou looked at the pavilion and was able to tell with his Sense that the place was at the center of the peripheral vision of the hundreds of men in black.

If there was a reason for this, it had to be due to Luo Leilei being among them.

It was a given that there might be other spies hanging around.

“Seems like those old dudes in the spirit palace weren’t blind after all,” he thought. “They just couldn’t let a spy do as they pleased in the Tianxuan Gate.

“I guess they’ve made a lot of preparations elsewhere, too, besides just this place.”

Xu Xiaoshou couldn’t help but recall that absurd counterattack back in his place at the Outer Yard that one night.

He’d jumped here and there right under the noses of hundreds of law enforcers out there, even though he thought he’d been clever enough with handling both Feng Kong and Shao Yi and that no one knew what he’d been doing.

“D*mn it...” he thought.

“Looking back on it now, that was as awkward as could be.

“Those old dudes sure know how to play the big game without alerting anyone...”

“If there’s nothing else, I’ll head back to my place to reinforce my training, then?” Xu Xiaoshou asked in a roundabout manner.

Shaking his head, Qiao Qianzhi unreservedly retorted, “Head to the pavilion, and stay put.”

Despite being one of Elder Sang’s disciples, it still wasn’t the time for breaking rules. After all, he’d probably contributed to that ruckus happening in the Tianxuan Gate.

Anyone suspected of being a spy wasn’t allowed to leave at that moment.

Xu Xiaoshou touched the metal ball before his chest. He didn’t mind staying around. He was only concerned if Jie would get him busted for talking when it shouldn’t talk.

If someone were to search him, they would find four world-stabilizing treasures on his person, and there would be a world of trouble for him if that happened.

He would be deemed the very culprit who had almost ended up collapsing the Tianxuan Gate.

While that had never been his intention, it would be impossible to clear his name if that happened.

He took a deep breath and, finding no other excuse he could use to slip away from the place with, simply said exasperatedly, “My stomach hurts...”

Doubted, Passive Points +472.

He was hoisted to the pavilion after racking up quite a bit of Passive Points.

...

There were four stone benches on the pavilion, and Zhou Tianshen alone took up an entire bench.

The rest of the spots were well-allocated. Mu Zixi and Mo Mo sat together, three people whose names he didn't know sat together, Luo Leilei was on the other side, and Zhao Qingteng, who was being rather restless, was sitting right across from her.

"Xu Xiaoshou." Mu Zixi patted the spot next to her, motioning for him to come and sit down.

Xu Xiaoshou went on to sit between Luo Leilei and Zhao Qingteng without a care instead.

Cursed, Passive Points +2.

Hmph! The girl flicked her pigtails, and, fuming, turned her head aside.

Xu Xiaoshou thought it was quite amusing. "Man, this brat really is too much. Is she really getting jealous over a seat here?"

He turned to look at Luo Leilei, who was sitting all prim and proper. While tension wasn't written all over her face, one could tell how tense she was by how tightly her hands were clenching her dress.

Xu Xiaoshou inched closer to her.

"What?" Luo Leilei tilted her head and glared at him.

"You're being rather obvious..." The young man smirked.

Luo Leilei followed his gaze to her hands, and casually loosened her grip.

She switched to telepathy: "The Black Scabbard isn't on me. You should be worried about yourself instead."

"I'm not buying that you didn't do anything else during the day after that," Xu Xiaoshou retorted, feeling amused.

Luo Leilei's eyes darted about, and she was feeling rather flustered as she said in an angry tone of voice, "Don't you know how to do telepathy? What are you doing being so loud? Do you have a death wish or something?"

"I don't know telepathy."

Luo Leilei was speechless.

Cursed, Passive Points +1.

She then threw a jade scroll at him. He grabbed hold of it and took a look at it before putting it away, feeling a headache coming on.

"This is rather difficult."

"..."

Luo Leilei couldn't believe her ears.

That man before her, who was capable of developing Innate Sword Will, was actually finding telepathy, which everyone knew how to do, "rather difficult."

Doubted, Passive Points +1.

She was silent.

Since he was incapable of telepathy, and given how many pairs of ears there were around them, she saw no need to continue talking to him.

The pavilion was all quiet after the two of them stopped talking.

It was even more so outside. Hundreds of people were around, and yet the only thing that could be heard was the sound of breathing. Everyone was paying attention to the sweat dripping from Ye Xiaotian's chin.

They wondered if the tenth person would emerge.

Xu Xiaoshou took a look at the jade scroll again but found that he was still incapable of learning it. Troubled, he looked into the distance.

The old pagoda tree was right ahead. The tree stayed lush throughout the seasons.

There was a nest of mystic sparrows on the tree. All the perceptive ones had left, leaving only one with a broken leg behind. That bird wanted to fly, yet was unable to do so under such a tense atmosphere.

"A caged bird unable to fly anymore."

Xu Xiaoshou watched for quite a while, a rather dazed expression on his face.

Luo Leilei was stunned. She followed his gaze, and, seeing the struggling bird, smirked.

The kid was incapable of telepathy, which meant there was no stopping him from yapping away.

"What do you mean 'caged'?" she asked exasperatedly.

"That tree's crown with lots of openings might as well be airtight to that bird now."

Luo Leilei rolled her eyes. She knew exactly what he meant with that line.

"If the bird really wanted to leave, it could simply spread its wings to do so," he said. "When push comes to shove, it could at least leave the crown by hopping on just one leg."

Xu Xiaoshou paused for quite a while before adding, "The mantis preys on the cicada, not knowing that the sparrow is right behind it. The sparrow's leg is broken, and it's the hunter's turn to salivate."

Luo Leilei was aghast.

Cursed, Passive Points +1.

The girl was already as flustered as she could be, and what Xu Xiaoshou just said was tantamount to pushing her over the edge, and she decided not to talk to him anymore.

Luo Leilei knew how much of a blabbermouth Xu Xiaoshou could be from back in the Tianxuan Gate. Her last psychological defense would crumble if she kept talking to him.

It was all silent again, and the young man by her side eventually turned his gaze from the tree back to her before sighing and lowering his head.

The pavilion was apparently rather old. There were cracks in the flooring, and several ants were seen dragging a dead body of a mosquito several times their size as they went on their way.

"It's probably gonna rain tomorrow..."

Luo Leilei was stunned again, and looked down, yet she was unable to tell where the voice had come from.

"What?"

"Haven't you heard that before? When the ants rush to move their lair, a heavy rain comes the next day that follows."

Luo Leilei's eyelids twitched. "What's all that nonsense?"

Sigh...

Xu Xiaoshou sighed all of a sudden and shook his head as he watched the exceptionally strong insects gradually disappear inside the cracks.

"It's a pity. Regardless of how strong the ants are, there's no way for them to fly, and they'll eventually head into darkness all the same."

"The h*ll..." Luo Leilei thought. She was so furious she felt as if her veins were popping out of her skin and that her liver was about to explode.

"Xu Xiaoshou, could you just stop yapping for a moment!" she yelled.

Requested, Passive Points +1.

The girl by his side immediately stood up as he opened his mouth, then walked with great strides to Mu Zixi and sat by her side.

"Umm..."

"Shut up!"

Luo Lei glared at him so intensely that she felt like her eyeballs were going to pop out.

Xu Xiaoshou was flabbergasted.

"What?" he thought. "Couldn't we just have a nice chat, eh? It's not like you have long to live. I was just worried you'd be lonely!"

"Gosh, this is what you do to people who are nice to you, eh..."

Crack!

Ye Xiaotian had finally reached his limit. The portal cracked and eventually shattered into specks of light.

Xu Xiaoshou smirked. That meant that Yuan Tou had succeeded in getting himself lost.

Dejection was seen in everyone's eyes, yet all of them moved at the same time, inadvertently scanning the pavilion as if they were expecting something.

Xu Xiaoshou shook his head a little and grinned.

"The show's about to start."

Chapter 184: The Lucky One

Qiao Qianzhi clapped Ye Xiaotian on the shoulder and said, "Yuan Tou is done for."

It was difficult to foster an Inner Yard disciple, and, furthermore, that man was one of the new 33 and had a bright future ahead of him.

Despite having a somewhat stained record, given that no one was perfect, his flaws were forgivable.

In this world, no one paid particular attention to someone's flaws. What people did pay attention to was how powerful a person was.

"It's a pity..."

Ye Xiaotian simply sighed. The path to reach the Great Path was fraught with incidents, and it wasn't uncommon to see someone gone due to one of such incidents.

He turned around and added, "We'll try one last time when we open the gate of the place normally a day later."

"Sure." Qiao Qianzhi agreed to it without any hesitation. He then turned around to look at Zhao Xidong. "Time to get to work."

"We've been waiting just to do that."

Zhao Xidong all of a sudden had a piece of grass dangling from his mouth that no one recalled him putting there, and there was a cynical look in his eyes. He then disappeared from where he stood with the wheel in his hands.

By the time he reappeared, he was already seen squatting at the fence of the pavilion.

"Yo!"

Everyone turned to look at it, their moods different.

For some of the veterans, seeing Zhao Xidong in law enforcer mode was like seeing a walking, talking "Tribunal," and they instinctively became flustered.

"Alright. I'll cut to the chase instead of beating around the bush."

Zhao Xidong pushed the wheel and said, "This thing here is called the 'Spirit Curtain Wheel of the 12 Pearls.' It reflects the conditions inside the Tianxuan Gate.

“When four of the 12 world-stabilizing treasures are lost, the Tianxuan Gate will start to collapse. I think you all experienced that fact firsthand.”

The handful of those who weren't in the know immediately realized what was going on right then and there, not daring to believe that the collapse was actually a man-made disaster.

Xu Xiaoshou glanced at the others, finding that everyone other than Luo Leilei and Mo Mo still seemed somewhat puzzled...

“These guys really are slow at picking up on things...” he thought.

Zhao Xidong then continued, “This type of incident didn't happen in years past, and even if someone was lucky enough to chance upon such treasures, it would still be difficult for them to break the seals.

“However, those treasures shall be the prizes of any who succeed in doing so.”

“Prizes?” Xu Xiaoshou's eyes immediately lit up. “Wait, is this to say that all four treasures on my person now are all mine to keep?” he thought.

Zhao Xidong glanced at him thoughtfully and continued, “But things are different this time around.”

“Oh?”

“The Tianxuan Gate was only open for two days. Losing four treasures at once is impossible, which means...”

“That there are spies?” Xu Xiaoshou finished the sentence.

Zhao Xidong stared at him and smirked. “You think that you're cleared of all suspicions just because you behave as if you're on our side?” he thought.

He then continued steadily, “Indeed. Furthermore, there's not one spy; there're two spies at hand.”

Two?

Mu Zixi blinked her huge eyes, not quite following what he was saying.

She knew who the spy was if there was only one. Sister Mo would definitely be a suspect, as that girl had been after her “Spirit Mark of Life” the whole time, which meant there was something wrong with her.

She then turned to Xu Xiaoshou, feeling even more puzzled.

After all, judging from the outcome alone, not only had her brother-in-training gotten the “Spirit Mark of Life” all of a sudden, but he'd even gotten a small portion of the “Sealing Stone” as well.

As such, she chose to say nothing. Xu Xiaoshou was around and would say what needed to be said, after all.

However, Xu Xiaoshou was also somewhat shocked.

In the case of two spies, he already knew that Luo Leilei was of the “Holy Servant,” as he was the one who'd busted her cover, which left one other person...

He thought that it could be Mo Mo as well, as that grey mist figure could be considered a spy.

Right, that thing had been after one of those treasures right from the start, after all.

However, when it came to sheer numbers alone, he was possibly the one with the highest number of treasures on him... and that thought caused him to immediately become somewhat flustered.

...

Zhao Xidong closely watched their reactions the whole time. Some were puzzled, some were confused, some were calm, and some were quiet...

Xu Xiaoshou was the one with the most reactions to pass over his face, and Zhao Xidong deemed that he was as suspicious as one could get.

"That guy definitely knows some insider information and is probably familiar with the treasures as well," he thought. "He could actually be the spy.

"But..."

Given that even Elder Xiao had made it very clear that the spy couldn't be Xu Xiaoshou, Zhao Xidong was feeling rather troubled, and he wondered why the elders were so sure about this.

Elder Sang's deduction made a lot of sense. There were probably two spies, and other than Luo Leilei, who they'd all seen from "Heaven's Vision," the identity of the spy was still a mystery.

If he were to go based on intuition alone, he would probably mark Luo Leilei, Xu Xiaoshou, and Mo Mo as suspects.

However, the Spiritual Law Division didn't go about their business through intuition alone. There needed to be evidence.

Even Luo Leilei, who was the most suspicious at the moment, could just claim that she just so happened to get to the top of the Black Cliff and saw the scabbard and tried to pry it out, just like anyone else would have.

As such...

"I'm very sorry to tell all of you and none of you are cleared of suspicion, so hand over your rings." Zhao Xidong opened his hands.

Everyone's expressions drastically changed. A space ring could be said to be a person's utmost privacy, with outcomes of their encounters stored within. They couldn't possibly just hand over their rings like that.

"It's absurd to make such a request on just suspicions alone!" The longer one spent in the Inner Yard, the more secrets one harbored. It was only natural that someone would be displeased.

"Oh?" Zhao Xidong looked at the one who'd said so and continued in a threatening tone, "If you get to the Tribunal, you won't even get to keep your underwear. We're not actually asking much of you now. What more do you want?"

“I...”

“Would you like to come with me, then?” Zhao Xidong twisted his head about.

That man became as flustered as one could get right there and then.

Xu Xiaoshou raised his hand. “I have a question.”

“Speak.”

“Assuming that there were two spies, and then someone else just chanced upon the treasures and managed to take them, what happens to them?”

Zhao Xidong was stunned. That was a question that he hadn’t thought about, yet he quickly dismissed that possibility deep down.

“There were only ten of you in there,” he thought. “Two of you were spies, and you’re saying that one more of you was lucky enough to just stumble upon the treasures? Are there such coincidences in this world?”

“There couldn’t be so many coincidences in this world,” he answered exasperatedly. “You really think that those treasures are something that just drop from the sky?”

“Indeed,” Xu Xiaoshou continued seriously. “There are indeed so many coincidences in this world.”

“Heh, so you’re telling me that you happened to get one of those treasures and that you’re not a spy?” Zhao Xidong smirked.

Xu Xiaoshou said no more and broke out “Hiding Pain,” letting it stand on the floor with a thump.

“What a coincidence. I’m indeed one of those lucky people.”

Doubted, Passive Points +472.

Zhao Xidong almost burst out laughing and added, “Do you think I’m blind? That’s just your cheap sword...”

He was stunned all of a sudden.

That sword was definitely the one he’d caught the crowd’s attention with back in the contest and caused quite a huge commotion.

However, the problem was the scabbard...

“The Black Scabbard?” Zhao Xidong exclaimed.

The image from “Heaven’s Vision” had been that of Luo Leilei prying off the scabbard and Xu Xiaoshou watching from the sidelines.

That meant that the two definitely had had an altercation.

He wondered how Xu Xiaoshou had managed to pry the “Black Scabbard” off of the most powerful member among the newly appointed 33.

“How is this possible?”

He turned to look at Luo Leilei, who blushed and said, “Why are you looking at me?”

“You really managed to take it off of her hands?” Zhao Xidong thought. He was shocked to the core.

He recalled the night where Xu Xiaoshou, who was still at Spiritual Cultivation Level nine, had managed to shoot Zhao Shu off like fireworks. As such, it would seem that it was plausible that this kid, who was already at early Origin Court Level, had snatched the scabbard from Luo Leilei’s hands. Everything actually...

Felt rather possible.

But!

Zhao Xidong felt his worldview collapsing. How was this possible? This was absurd!

Someone at early Origin Court level defeating someone at the peak of Upper Spiritual Level?

Well, it wasn’t like something like this hadn’t happened before, but it was just too d*mn rare! You could say that Zhao Shu had lost due to miscalculations, but Luo Leilei...

The girl wasn’t of the same order of magnitude as Zhao Shu to begin with!

More importantly, if the “Black Scabbard” was now in Xu Xiaoshou’s hands, how would they confirm their suspicions with Luo Leilei, then?

Zhao Xidong was puzzled.

The two spies were now unknown again?

Chapter 185: You Refuse to Balk even Now?

Was that the Black Scabbard?

Ye Xiaotian and Qiao Qianzhi turned to one another and looked knowingly into each other’s eyes.

Unlike Zhao Xidong, both of them knew that Xu Xiaoshou was Elder Sang’s disciple and would not make a fuss about his identity.

As for combat prowess, if the kid had caught the old fart’s attention, it would mean that he had unique combat skills.

What they were most shocked about was how cunning Elder Sang had been.

Ye Xiaotian snorted coldly. “That old dude said that he had never given away any information deliberately. But looking at how things are going, he could have just given an order instead.”

“I do not think so, though.”

Qiao Qianzhi pondered over it and added, “I have only told the old man about the information regarding the White Cave after those kids got inside the Tianxuan Gate. It means that they knew nothing about the Fourth Sword beforehand.”

“It could be intuition then?”

Qiao Qianzhi was a little puzzled and said, “Would it mean that the old man was accurate in his assumptions?”

“Assumptions?” Ye Xiaotian rolled his eyes and added, “He has duped you then. I think you would not believe it even if he were to tell you how much he had done behind everyone’s backs.”

Qiao Qianzhi did not know how to respond to the remark.

“Well, I do not think it is so terrible.” He then recalled something and added, “The bet which both of you made...”

Ye Xiaotian then glanced at the two from the Holy Divine Palace standing behind them and said, “I think Jiang Bianyan is here to talk about it. Well, it is not like that guy is of much help, so we are already trying to get rid of them.”

Haha, haha, haha...

Qiao Qianzhi laughed out loud. “It is easy to call for help but difficult to get them to leave. I think you are about to lose.”

“Heh, it is still too early to tell who wins and who loses. Anyway, it is only the Black Scabbard,” retorted Ye Xiaotian.

He waved the issue off dismissively.

Honestly, even if there had not been a bet between him and Elder Sang, Ye Xiaotian would have gifted the scabbard to Xu Xiaoshou, anyway. After all, the kid was Elder Sang’s disciple. It did not bother him that the kid had the item.

Besides, life was full of surprises. They would continuously need to scout for people capable of accomplishing better things for the future.

Ye Xiaotian looked at his silver hair.

He knew it was past his time to continue fighting to be among the top. He felt satisfied just managing the Spirit Palace and nurturing some highly capable people.

The rest would be left to the young.

...

It also surprised Jiang Bianyan when he saw the Black Scabbard.

If Xu Xiaoshou only had another piece of treasure, it would not be so concerning to the Hallmaster of a side hall in the Holy Divine Palace. For regardless of how powerful the said treasure was, the Hallmaster would have experienced and seen it all.

However, things were different with the Black Scabbard. The symbolic meaning of the scabbard far eclipsed its value.

“The Tiansang Spirit Palace is something else. Instead of hiding the piece, they openly gift it to a disciple just like that.”

Yu Zhiwen noticed Jiang Bianyan’s unusual reaction and asked, “What is so special about this Black Scabbard?”

Jiang Bianyan had a wry grin on his face and replied, “It is the sole purpose of your trip.”

Her sole purpose? Yu Zhiwen frowned and finally realized what he was saying. There was a startled look in her eyes as she asked, “Is this... the Scabbard of the Fourth Sword?”

“Indeed, it is.”

Yu Zhiwen was flustered when Jiang Bianyan confirmed the fact.

That was the Scabbard of the Fourth Sword?

The Scabbard of the Fourth Sword, known as the Sword of Disaster, was one of the Five Great Divine Instruments of the Continent.

If she were to get her hands on it before entering the White Cave, would it not improve her chances?

The veiled girl’s eyes flashed with excitement yet again. It was the sword that would have made the Eighth Sword Deity and any other swordsman go frantic to possess it.

Fueled with the desire for the Divine Instrument, she looked at Xu Xiaoshou and took one step forward, without thinking.

Jiang Bianyan casually tugged at her wrist with his spiritual source, pulling her back.

“Calm down,” he whispered to her.

“Now is not the time for you to step out. It is already good enough that we could stay around and listen to the internal affairs of the Tiansang Spirit Palace.”

Jiang Bianyan sighed as he shook his head. He felt disheartened as he watched as the girl finally suppressed her urge.

The Eighth Sword Deity.

Despite having perished for so many years, his glorious record in combat still shone as brightly as it had back when he was alive.

...

[Back at the Pavilion]

Zhao Xidong eyed Xu Xiaoshou’s Black Scabbard and hesitated.

Why would he show off the thing out in the open? It was not how things were done!

Should he not be hiding it instead? Why would a spy be so conspicuous?

Zhao Xidong opened his mouth, but Xu Xiaoshou spoke before he could say anything. He said, "I headed east right after entering the Tianxuan Gate and reached the bottom of the Black Cliff not long after."

After training there for half a day, I got intrigued by the boundless sword aura blasting from the top. Since I have made some breakthroughs, I flew up there."

And then, I got my hands on the Black Scabbard."

Xu Xiaoshou looked sincere and truthful when he explained his exploits, elaborating facts using his initiative, and exhibited frankness. There was no reason to suspect him, was there?

It would be absurd if anyone still wanted to search for the ring.

The more Zhao Xidong analyzed the situation, the more he felt everything seemed suspicious. He kept feeling that Xu Xiaoshou was not someone he could apprehend. The kid had even evaded arrest after killing Zhao Shu.

Why was he so obedient this time?

It is impossible!

Zhao Xidong had a smirk on his face when he extended a hand and said, "Stop pretending, Xu Xiaoshou. Do you genuinely think that I do not know what you are trying to play here?"

Xu Xiaoshou immediately felt dismayed.

This Zhao Xidong character was a piece of work. But Xu Xiaoshou did not want to hand over the ring. There were two more treasures in there, and he would lose them if he were to hand it over. They would also regard him as a spy.

He immediately felt somewhat vexed, on account he was not the spy.

Seeing that there was not much chance of weaseling out of the situation, Xu Xiaoshou resorted to playing along to manipulate his way out.

"What does that mean?" Xu Xiaoshou asked as he looked at Zhao Xidong's extended hand.

"What do you think?"

Zhao Xidong retorted, adamant about checking Xu Xiaoshou's ring there and then, and believing no one would stop him.

When Zhao Xidong saw the young man hesitating, he grabbed his hand, then shook it twice.

"Well, good day," Xu Xiaoshou said, responding by gripping his hand in a shake.

Zhao Xidong felt the firm grip of Xu Xiaoshou's hand.

And right away, it made him furious.

"Your ring!" he scowled.

"I do not have a habit of giving guys rings," Xu Xiaoshou replied.

“Xu Xiaoshou, you dare to resist orders!”

Zhao Xidong’s face twisted in fury when he could not shake off Xu Xiaoshou’s hand.

What is with this guy? Why did he have so much power?

The law enforcers surrounding the pavilion were immediately riled up. From the way things looked between the two men, the impression was that a fight would break out

“I am a good guy.” Xu Xiaoshou said with a sincere expression.

“If you are a good guy, you will hand over your ring,” Zhao Xidong said as he lowered his head and looked at Xu Xiaoshou hand, then shouted, “Let go of me!”

He could shake off the hand with his spiritual force, but doing so meant he would have to resort to violence.

“I know who the spy is.”

Everyone suddenly went silent after hearing him say that.

They seemed tense as they looked at the young man at the pavilion.

He slowly turned around to look at Luo Leilei, who looked at him with an uneasy expression.

Xu Xiaoshou felt sorry, but he could not bear to hand over his ring. To get out of the situation, he changed the subject and ratted out on Luo Leilei.

Whether she could get out of the situation would depend on how smart and witty she was. Xu Xiaoshou believed in her ability to do it.

“Luo Leilei.”

He then pointed at the girl dressed in purple. Mu Zixi immediately looked startled, darting her eyes back and forth between the two of them.

She felt caught in a pincer attack.

The girl gripped her pigtailed nervously. She wanted to stand up, but she was afraid that all eyes would be on her if she were to make any move.

After assessing the situation, she eventually chose to remain still, feeling like she was sitting on needles.

“Xu Xiaoshou, you...” Luo Leilei looked stunned, realizing that she was betrayed just like that.

However, when she thought about it, Xu Xiaoshou had not much to do with her.

She first met him at the top of the Black Cliff, back in the Tianxuan Gate.

She had extended her invitation for him to join the Holy Servant after he robbed her of the Black Scabbard, and he had refused the invitation.

As she recalled, she had been the one trying to win him over all the time.

Was there any reason for him to betray her? No, he was not doing that. He was merely making accusations, that was all.

Luo Leilei rose and chuckled bitterly. She was unfazed as she slowly removed an ice-blue egg from her ring.

“What a coincidence. I am one of the lucky ones too.”

She looked at Xu Xiaoshou with an amused look in her eyes.

So, he wanted to play games? Fine then. He got what he wished.

Xu Xiaoshou looked shocked.

He seemed to remember how adamant he was all those years ago. Happy to play the role of a faithful follower of sorts...

Was he kidding? He would not balk at the chance even now!

Chapter 186: Exposed

Zhao Xidong froze, momentarily stunned by the revelation.

Was luck on his side?

Undoubtedly, these were two spies who were trying to double-cross each other!

They each possessed a precious artifact that held the Tianxuan Gate together. What else could they be, if not spies?

He put his palm out again. If he found something questionable in their rings, it would confirm his suspicions and their crimes.

“Give me your rings!”

Luo Leilei gave Xu Xiaoshou a dirty look. She was undaunted as she marched up to Zhao Xidong and her fearlessness stunned Xu Xiaoshou somewhat.

The Sealing Stone that he had taken was the third artifact holding the Tianxuan Gate together. The Gate had collapsed soon afterward. It meant that Luo Leilei had the fourth artifact.

But here she was, revealing the egg to everyone. Did it mean that there was nothing hidden inside her ring at all?

Did she play him out?

“Search his ring first. Look at him dragging his feet. He must have something to hide,” Luo Leilei said as she glanced at Xu Xiaoshou.

“Hurry!” Zhao Xidong urged him hurriedly.

Exasperated and left with no choice, Xu Xiaoshou stepped forward. He hesitated when he held out his hand with the ring on one of his fingers.

“You are intruding on my privacy,” he protested as a last resort.

“Hah!”

Zhao Xidong cared nothing for his privacy. He yanked the ring off with a furious tug.

A look of pain swept across Xu Xiaoshou’s face.

With a Space Ring, a person could only access it after its owner died. Also, the owner would need to grant access to the said person.

Naturally, it did not apply to everyone. A person with supreme power like Ye Xiaotian was such an exception.

Zhao Xidong injected his spiritual senses into the ring after being granted access. A strange look flickered across his face soon after.

What had he seen inside?

A few heaps of clothes, of which some were wearable while others seemed stained with blood.

There were mountains of Spirit Crystals, a few jars of honey, and an incredible number of pills.

He did not bother with the number of Spiritual Cultivation Pills in the ring. But how did the guy get his hands on so many Origin Court Pills? The quantity he had amassed did not seem like something a disciple who had just joined the Inner Yard should possess!

Zhao Xidong did not spend too much time wondering about the pills, though. Instead, he focused on looking for the artifact. His initial search came up with nothing.

He searched repeatedly and still found nothing.

The corners of Zhao Xidong’s lips twitched. It was not what he had expected. There were two spies, which meant that they should each have two artifacts on them. Why had he not found anything?

If Xu Xiaoshou only had the Black Scabbard on him, then the other three artifacts must be with Luo Leilei.

How could she have amassed them all within two days?

It seemed highly implausible!

Was Xu Xiaoshou telling the truth, after all? Perhaps he had been lucky enough to stumble across the Black Scabbard. Maybe there was another spy present who had not yet revealed himself or herself.

Zhao Xidong glanced at Mo Mo discreetly. She appeared composed and unfazed by what was going on.

The rest observed the change in Zhao Xidong’s facial expression and silently concluded that Xu Xiaoshou was innocent.

“What about the rest of your rings?” asked Zhao Xidong after giving it some thought.

Xu Xiaoshou grimaced and replied, “Are you kidding me? Do I look rich? You think I have more Space Rings?”

“Why do you not ask me if I have the more expensive stuff like a Space Bracelet or a Space Necklace?”

A Space Necklace?

It was something not even Zhao Xidong had!

Zhao Xidong smiled mirthlessly at Xu Xiaoshou as he shoved his ring back into his hand. “Honestly, you are quite rich,” Zhao Xidong quipped.

“Do not spout nonsense!” exclaimed Xu Xiaoshou as he waved his hands frantically. “There is a crowd watching us. Do you not know you might get me killed by saying stuff like that?”

“I am merely an Outer Yard disciple,” he said, putting on as innocent a face as he could muster.

His remark left Zhao Xidong speechless.

Everyone else there was equally at a loss for words.

It was then that everyone remembered Xu Xiaoshou was just an Outer Yard disciple. If he had not mentioned it, they would have continued treating him like a core disciple.

: Suspected, Passive Points +144.

: Impressed, Passive Points +66.

: Begrudged, Passive Points +89.

Hmm...

“Hehe, hehe...” Xu Xiaoshou chuckled to himself, overjoyed at the unexpected Passive Points he had gained. He kept his ring and quietly stepped aside.

“You are not totally off the hook. Do not go running around. We will need to run another check on you using the Spiritual Law Division system.”

“Sure, I understand.”

Xu Xiaoshou nodded obediently. Then, under Zhao Xidong’s reproachful stare, he dusted off his clothes, loosened his neck collar, and calmly sat down.

“Your ring,” asked Zhao Xidong as he turned to Luo Leilei.

Disbelief and suspicion flickered across Luo Leilei’s eyes as she pulled her eyes away from Xu Xiaoshou.

She remembered asking Xu Xiaoshou at the entrance to the Tianxuan Gate, and the latter had told her he had the other artifacts on him.

How did he slip past Zhao Xidong’s inspection?

“Your ring,” Zhao Xidong demanded again.

Luo Leilei’s eyes fell on the Space Ring on her finger. Upon closer examination, one could distinguish the slight difference in the carving around the ring.

It was of a naked woman, her arms wrapped around and her face buried in her knees. With her limbs shackled, she looked like a slave, weeping silently to herself.

Luo Leilei pulled her ring off her finger, placed the Ice Dragon Egg back into the ring, and handed it to Zhao Xidong.

“Here.”

Zhao Xidong raised an eyebrow at the gesture of utter sincerity. When did everyone become so honest?

He reached out for the ring and froze as soon as his fingertips touched it. He could not move at all, not even his eyeballs.

It surprised everyone who stood near him.

“What is going on?”

Zhao Xidong did not move for a long while. Someone finally realized something was wrong when they caught the faint smell of burning flesh in the air.

BUZZ!

Purple electrical discharge appeared on Zhao Xidong’s body. It was then that he shook with violent convulsions.

“Ahh... Ahh... Ahh... Ahh...”

His teeth chattered, his muscles spasmed, and his hair stood on ends. The law enforcer’s skin turned a charred black that matched his black clothes after Luo Leilei gave a boost to the electric shock she had unleashed.

An icy shiver ran down Xu Xiaoshou’s spine. One should not trifle with this young woman. Look at Zhao Xidong. He looked as if lightning had struck him.

“A spy!”

“She is a spy!”

Angry roars echoed around the place as everyone finally realized what had happened. Men in black robes flooded the pavilion.

CRACK!

Suddenly, a dark purple lightning bolt struck the pavilion and pierced right through its roof.

The electrical discharge surged outward when it hit the pavilion, electrocuting and paralyzing everyone.

Luo Leilei pulled her ring away and gave Zhao Xidong a slight push. The man fell to the ground stiffly with a loud thud.

“I am sorry. Honestly, I only have the Ice Dragon Egg. But I cannot let you see what is inside my Space Ring.”

She whispered and then swept her eyes across Xu Xiaoshou. She could tell that he was putting on an act to look paralyzed.

She turned to look at Ye Xiaotian. Her cherry red lips parted slightly.

“Sovereign Stage cultivators may not challenge lower-level Spiritual cultivators. Am I not right?”

The look in Ye Xiaotian’s eyes hardened. “But you are different.”

Luo Leilei laughed softly and asked, “How am I different? Besides, you have Hallmaster Jiang, do you not?”

Jiang Bianyan frowned.

She was right. The Holy Divine Palace had a rule that governed powerful cultivators on the continent.

Powerful cultivators who had knowledge of the Great Path could destroy everything in their path if they engaged in battle. Thus, they could not engage in fights with cultivators of lower cultivation levels.

Before Jiang Bianyan could say anything, a few law enforcers, who had regained their mobility, charged at Luo Leilei with their blades.

“Prepare to die, witch!”

“Your cultivation level is too low! You are not qualified to fight our Dean!”

Electrical discharge flashed in Luo Leilei’s eyes. The fierce light revealed the anxiety churning inside her.

Even though a majority of the Spiritual Law Division’s law enforcers were only at the Innate stage, quite a few had reached the Master stage as well. They were all worthy opponents in their own right.

That she had neutralized everyone temporarily was only because she had the element of surprise on her side.

Otherwise, Zhao Xidong alone would have given her a tough time!

Fortunately, her greatest threat was now lying unconscious at her feet from the earlier electrical shock. She should be able to handle the others.

But only if the three Sovereign stage cultivators stayed out of the fight!

She bit her finger. A spot of crimson red appeared on her fingertip. Luo Leilei pointed her finger downward and swiped it across her chest.

“As decreed!”

With a sudden flare of purple electricity, she shot up into the sky. Thick, fuming spiritual energy flooded into her energy reserve.

A faint Master-stage presence gradually billowed out and filled the air at the pavilion.

Chapter 187 You Can’t Force Happiness

A breakthrough?

Everyone around Luo Leilei reeled back with slight shock. They had not expected Luo Leilei to have surpassed the Innate Stage and entered the Master Stage at such a critical moment.

She had displayed a level of cultivation that few of the older cohorts of the Inner Yard Thirty-Three had shown.

Not to mention she had just recently joined as a member of the Inner Yard Thirty-Three.

Mo Mo studied Luo Leilei's cultivation level, still rising at an incredible pace, and shook her head. "It is not a breakthrough. She broke a seal."

She was rather surprised and wondered who had placed the seal on Luo Leilei in the first place. It must have been a seal placed in advance and slipped past the notice of the dean and the others.

Xu Xiaoshou was dumbstruck. He could not believe it. Had the young woman been suppressing her actual level of cultivation all along?

If she had unleashed her full power when they had fought in the Tianxuan Gate, he might not have had run into the Grey Mist Figure!

Hold on a minute!

If she had unleashed her seal in the Tianxuan Gate when her powers were no match for the Grey Mist Figure, then the laws that governed the world inside the Tianxuan Gate would have destroyed her.

Luo Leilei's sudden breakthrough was an unexpected turn of events that had suddenly shifted the odds in the fight.

The four Master Stage law enforcers stepped forward. They were the only fighters who could take on Luo Leilei, as Zhao Xidong was down for the count.

The remaining law enforcers remained calm and steadily got into formation around them. These law enforcers may not be able to take on a Master Stage cultivator one-on-one, but they could still provide adequate cover when they fought as a team.

Somehow, the law enforcers sensed they were in a precarious situation. Everything was in good order only moments ago, but now the control they had seemed to have slipped from their grasp.

But the presence of the three Sovereign-stage cultivators on the steps eased their anxiety.

Who cared if Luo Leilei was at the Master Stage? With the dean and the other bigwigs there, she would not cause them too much trouble at all!

"The Holy Vassal?"

Ye Xiaotian exclaimed out loud.

He could still join the fight and take Luo Leilei down. But like what Luo Leilei had said, Jiang Bianyan was standing right next to him. He had to spare a thought for the other man's dignity.

Luo Leilei did not answer him.

Upon unleashing Thor's Form, a field of purple electrical pulses crackled around her, and a majestic pair of Purple Lightning Wings sprouted from her back. Luo Leilei gazed down at the four Master Stage law enforcers.

Her four opponents unleashed their cultivation as well. While this young woman was not merely an ordinary Master Stage cultivator, they were not to be trifled with, either.

At that moment, the atmosphere became taut with tension.

A sparrow with a broken leg did not even struggle before it plunged from the old pagoda tree and dropped dead. It lay stiffly on the ground like Zhao Xidong.

The ground was scorched. A fight seemed on the verge of breaking out at any moment.

Jiang Bianyan seized the moment and telepathically sent a message. He said, "Dean Ye, please do not mind me. We have to kill every member of the Holy Vassal. They are the reason I am here. We cannot hold ourselves back, for it is what they expect."

Ye Xiaotian nodded. He would not have allowed Luo Leilei to have her way, even if Jiang Bianyan had not spoken those words.

The incident with Cheng Xingchu had shown that underneath his taciturn, reserved veneer was a man who did not shy away from exploiting his strength to overpower the weak.

"I will take your silence as an affirmation then."

It did not matter to Ye Xiaotian that she was from the Holy Vassal. She had tried to steal the Black Scabbard from the Tianxuan Gate. She might have failed, but her attempt still counted as an unforgivable crime.

Ye Xiaotian raised his hand. The sound of buzzing filled the air.

An incredible power suddenly filled the Heavens and brought with it a deathly silence.

"Shackles of the Abyss?"

Luo Leilei panicked. She might have lightning speed, but it would not help her against such powerful defensive skills.

She did not expect Ye Xiaotian would risk ruining his reputation to fight a female cultivator less powerful than he was. He was not giving her any chances of winning the fight at all!

Luo Leilei's eyes filled with trepidation as she stared across the horizon.

Based on their plan, the Holy Vassal should have already infiltrated the Spirit Palace. The lightning bolt she shot out earlier had been her signal to them.

But there was no sign of them at all.

Life always came with unexpected perils. Her reinforcements had not arrived!

It was then that she spied Xu Xiaoshou, trying to sneak away from the pavilion. She did not know what he was trying to do, but she had an idea about how to take advantage of him.

A sly glint flashed across her eyes. Luo Leilei pretended to act as if they had caught her. She shouted out desperately to Xu Xiaoshou, saying, "Xu Xiaoshou, run!"

Everyone froze instantly before swiveling their heads toward the pavilion.

There, they saw a young man crouching with his palm pressed against his chest. He looked suspicious with one foot out of the pavilion, like he was sneaking away.

Everyone looked surprised.

"Does it mean that Xu Xiaoshou and Luo Leilei are in on this together?"

...

[Flashback to a few moments ago]

A fight was on the verge of erupting. The four Master Stage law enforcers had already surrounded Luo Leilei.

While everyone's attention was on the young woman in the sky, Xu Xiaoshou steadied the metallic ball under his robes and quietly backed away.

Jie had been dying to speak a few times. Fortunately, Xu Xiaoshou seemed able to communicate with it using his spiritual senses. Having pacified it several times, Jie did not cause any commotion.

But Xu Xiaoshou could sense that it was agitated by the murderous tension in the air.

As a puppet from the Slaughter Cape, Jie possessed extremely violent tendencies. If Xu Xiaoshou ignored it, Jie would reveal itself and turn the entire place into a slaughterhouse.

But no matter how powerful Jie was, with three Sovereign Stage cultivators keeping watch, it could not take down all three of them if it tried.

Xu Xiaoshou was not willing to risk it. Besides, he was not a spy or a traitor. There was no point in getting into a fight with people on his side.

Would it not be so much better to sneak away to find a hiding spot far away from the thick of battle? Then he could carefully go through the loot that he had recovered in the Tianxuan Gate.

It was at that point that Luo Leilei shouted out, drawing attention to him.

...

: Suspected, Passive Points +471.

Xu Xiaoshou completely froze on the spot.

He turned around, looking rather silly. He did not know where Luo Leilei had learned to use such nasty tricks. Why was she so adamant in dragging him into her mess?

No!

She was not simply dragging him into her mess. The woman was shoving him right into the gaping jaws of death!

Why would she do something like that?

Then, Xu Xiaoshou remembered how Luo Leilei had extended to him several invitations to join her in the Tianxuan Gate. Was she trying to force his hand because gentle persuasion had not worked?

He looked at the stunned faces staring at him before he saw the expression of astonishment sweeping across the dean's face. Xu Xiaoshou knew he might not get out of the situation with ease.

How was he supposed to explain himself?

It was impossible!

Anyone else would have fallen to their knees and given up instantly. But not Xu Xiaoshou. The cogwheels in his head spun furiously, for at that precarious moment his life hung in the balance.

His face twisted with anguish as he shouted back, "Luo Leilei, I have told you countless times! I am not interested in you! You cannot force happiness! I will not join the Holy Vassal!"

Huh?

A deathly silence descended upon them all as soon as Xu Xiaoshou said that.

It was Luo Leilei who now looked shocked and embarrassed this time around.

She nearly fell from the sky. She stared at the looks of intrigue on everyone's faces and flushed bright red.

"Xu Xiaoshou, what nonsense are you spewing?"

: Cursed, Passive Points +1.

: Impressed, Passive Points +366.

: Begrudged, Passive Points +101.

Xu Xiaoshou appeared oblivious and lost in his thoughts. His voice softened to a whisper after the thunderous roar he had released. He seemed to mutter to himself, but everyone could hear him as clear as day.

"I am sorry. I will not leave with you. You are a good person..."

But the Spirit Palace is where my best memories lie. My master is here, and so are my juniors and seniors. The ones who love me and the ones whom I want to kill... um, whom I love are here."

He looked up and stared Luo Leilei directly in the eyes. His voice was resolute as he continued, "I cannot leave!"

His words might seem like the words of a lost soul muttering to himself, but they were but mere distraction trying to hide a single word he had uttered.

Master!

Xu Xiaoshou had not singled out his master. But he could tell from his Sense that Ye Xiaotian and Qiao Qianzhi had lowered their guards as soon as they had heard him mention the word.

He had been right. They knew he was Elder Sang's disciple!

He had promised not to reveal his relationship with Elder Sang, but he had guessed that those old fellows had known all along.

Otherwise, he probably would not have been able to enter the Tianxuan Gate. Ye Xiaotian would not have tasked him with saving the world. He also would not have told Xu Xiaoshou that he was the most trustworthy of the lot.

After hearing what Xu Xiaoshou had said, everyone turned their attention back to Luo Leilei.

The young woman was hovering in midair, looking dumbstruck and horrified. Xu Xiaoshou stared at her with a smug smile on his face.

Hey! She tried to sabotage him, didn't she? Well, she still had a long way to go if she wanted to outwit him!

Chapter 188: A Blind Guy?

Luo Leilei nearly spat out a mouthful of blood.

She had expected her devious plan to get Xu Xiaoshou expelled from the Tiansang Spirit Palace. If he could not remain there, it would force him to leave with her.

She did not expect him to respond in such a humiliating way. He painted her as a horrible woman who was trying to force herself on a young man! And he was so smug about how he had diverted back all the attention on her.

"What the hell!"

She nearly threw herself at the young man so that she could kill him!

Common sense stopped her from her rash impulse, but it didn't stop the torrent of furious curses she spewed at Xu Xiaoshou.

Luo Leilei's ranting and dissatisfaction transformed into Passive Points that enriched Xu Xiaoshou's store of Passive Points.

When Xu Xiaoshou saw the flurry of notifications appearing on his Information Bar, the wide grin he had nearly split his face into two.

No, he had to get a hold of himself!

There were so many people watching. He had to keep up the act!

He forced a pained look on his face. It was a look of emotional turmoil and one that a person who was suffering from constipation would show. Xu Xiaoshou stared at Luo Leilei and shook his head. His eyes seemed full of grim determination.

Luo Leilei was speechless.

How infuriating!

She turned her head away. She might do something reckless if she did not get him out of her sight.

“Xu Xiaoshou, you will pay for this!”

Luo Leilei cursed and swore she would have nothing to do with him ever again. He already taught her a lesson in the Tianxuan Gate, so why had she not learned?

Ye Xiaotian stood on the steps and watched the two sabotaging each other. He realized what was going on.

If Xu Xiaoshou was not a spy, then besides Luo Leilei, the other spy must be hiding in their midst. Time waited for no man and he was not interested in watching the young pair bicker with each other.

“Seize her!”

With Shackles of the Abyss still activated, Luo Leilei was immobilized in midair. She could only watch as the four Master Stage cultivators around her unleashed their cultivation and lunged at her.

Her words were caustic and sarcastic, despite the look of helplessness in her eyes. “Hah! I cannot believe it! You are a Sovereign Stage cultivator. Yet, you need to mobilize four Master Stage cultivators to help you capture a helpless little girl. What a display of your might, esteemed Dean Ye!”

Ye Xiaotian ignored her words, then sighed softly and replied, “I am no longer your dean.”

Luo Leilei shut her eyes in despair.

Was it the end for her?

She was the only one restrained by the Shackles of the Abyss. The shackles did not affect the four Master Stage law enforcers.

The spiritual force radiating from their raised palms contrasted starkly against their ordinary appearance, and it was a sight to behold.

The terrifying waves of energy seemed more destructive than Xu Xiaoshou’s Lesser Fireball.

Luo Leilei had only unleashed her Thor’s Form and could not summon further layers of protection after being held down by Ye Xiaotian’s Shackles of the Abyss.

Her enemies’ spiritual force streaked toward her, and everyone knew what was going to happen to her next.

Emotions rippled through Xu Xiaoshou as he watched imminent death approach the young woman.

He knew it was the harsh and cruel reality of the world of cultivation, where everyone would carry the burden of killing for a cause.

One’s allegiance to a faction was a burden one had to bear. The slightest deviation from one’s path because of the choices one made was another burden. They determined the fate that one might face at any given time in the future. And the fate that awaited the person might be a terrible one.

There were always opposing parties at odds with one another in the world. Good and evil were not easily discernible. It all depended on where one stood.

Perhaps, from where Luo Leilei stood, she was not wrong at all. Unfortunately, the circumstances dictated she had to face her fate.

“Power is the only thing that determines your fate.”

Xu Xiaoshou turned away resolutely. He had no reason and no power to change what was happening.

BOOM!

Four palms pushed downward. The spiritual force building up in their palms erupted suddenly, sending waves of energy that distorted and shook the very fabric of the Heavens. A thunderous explosion echoed through the air.

Shocked by the booming explosion, everyone fell silent.

Was that the power of a Master Stage cultivator?

One who knew the Path at the Innate Stage could tap into its power at the Master Stage, and in time, master this power at the Sovereign Stage. Cultivators who reached the Master Stage already possessed enough strength to move mountains and fill oceans.

Boosted by the powers of the Great Path, even a simple punch could be devastating.

The looks of awe on everyone’s faces gradually changed to sheer disbelief in the next instant.

Luo Leilei looked unaffected.

Surrounded by four Master Stage cultivators, Luo Leilei stood proudly in midair. Thor’s Form and purple lightning were still twirling around her body.

The palms of the four Master Stage cultivators landed and failed to do her any harm. It was as if they had hit the most impenetrable object in the universe.

Everyone was dumbstruck, and the look of disbelief showed on all their faces.

“Is it because of the dean’s Shackles of the Abyss? It is still active, so their blows landed on the barriers erected by the Shackles of the Abyss instead?”

“No! Look closer. The attacks from the four law enforcers did not land on Luo Leilei at all!”

Those who were more astute immediately realized what was going on. Everyone used their spiritual senses and was surprised when they saw the thinnest distance separating Luo Leilei and the blows from the four palms of the Master Stage cultivators.

It meant that the earlier explosion had resulted from the four Master Stage cultivators’ spiritual forces suddenly releasing on their own!

The revelation sent everyone into a state of bewilderment.

Why had they stopped in the middle of their attack?

It was then that everyone realized the looks of agony on the faces of the Master Stage law enforcers. Someone had forcibly seized control over their bodies.

A bigger shock seized Xu Xiaoshou.

Unlike the others, he could see the terrifying sword energy that appeared out of nowhere and attacked the four law enforcers.

The sword energy suddenly materialized and hindered them in the middle of their attack. The law enforcers had turned their full attention to protecting themselves.

But he could see they were losing the fight!

The sword energy...

Those men...

The look of disbelief overwhelmed Xu Xiaoshou. It looked like a move in All Things are Swords: I Am the Sword!

Hold on a minute!

His pupils dilated with a sudden realization. He had stolen I Am the Sword from the masked man!

That meant...

"Is he here?" he muttered.

Xu Xiaoshou felt a sudden prickling numbness spread across his scalp. The impulse to turn tail and run for his life was overpowering, for here was a man who had his eyes on him!

But making a move at that point would be akin to throwing himself right into danger.

No. Xu Xiaoshou had to keep calm and blend in with the crowd!

He sneaked behind a pillar, threw a glance at Ye Xiaotian, and felt a wave of uneasiness.

The man had chopped off the dean's arm effortlessly. Was he still safe there?

The four Master Stage law enforcers in the air were showing signs of losing the fight. Blood was dripping from their eyes, noses, mouths, and ears. After a moment, their bodies stiffened.

Then, a sudden force broke out!

Four sword energies burst out of their bodies, skewering them from head to toe and locking them in place, as countless white sword energies slashed at them relentlessly.

And in no time, the four Master Stage cultivators were drenched in blood.

Xu Xiaoshou frowned. This display of All Things are Swords seemed impressive, but it was not as powerful as the one that the masked man had unleashed to contain the nine great Elders.

He had seized instant control over the Elders and had not given them any time to fight back.

What Xu Xiaoshou was witnessing at the moment was a pale comparison.

Instinctively, Xu Xiaoshou turned toward the small path in front of the Council Hall. It was the only path that led through the forest from the outside into the pavilion.

“A hostile intruder?”

The intruders were no ordinary cultivators. Everyone suddenly realized what was going on and looked to the small path.

They could hear something ominous moving slowly and deliberately.

“Dudu!”

When they heard the voice, the four Master Stage cultivators in the air finally succumbed and collapsed to the ground. Tiny sword energies continued to tear into their skin and flesh like daggers.

Luo Leilei was elated, and her eyes lit up.

Brother Shuangxing has arrived!

“Dudu!”

Everyone stared in horror at the four cultivators struggling on the ground. The voice sounded like a thunderous blow that struck them squarely in the chest.

Those were Master-stage cultivators! They were not the average run-of-the-mill cultivators. How were they taken down so effortlessly?

Was the new challenger a Sovereign Stage cultivator?

The law enforcers threw furtive glances at Ye Xiaotian and saw the solemn look on his face as he stared at the end of the narrow pathway.

After some time, someone finally emerged from the corner of the pathway.

A man dressed in old, faded robes dusty from travel and his snowy-white fingers gripped a purple cane.

“Dudu!”

It stunned everyone at the pavilion.

A blind guy?

Chapter 189: I Came to Pick Someone Up

The man was sweeping and tapping his cane as he made his way forward. He had to be blind!

But a cultivator who had reached the Innate Stage could see the world with his spiritual senses. Why would he require a cane to get around?

Was the blind man just an ordinary person?

Everyone extended their spiritual senses to probe the blind young man, but they detected no cultivation at all. He was devoid of any spiritual strength, and his body was no more than a fragile husk—he was just an ordinary man.

Was it a joke?

Four Master Stage cultivators were lying on the ground because of him. How could he be an ordinary man?

There was confusion on the faces of many of the law enforcers, and Xu Xiaoshou was equally puzzled.

With his spiritual senses and Sense skill, he should be able to detect everyone's cultivation.

He had used every means of detection at his disposal, but scanning this blind young man was akin to throwing a rock into the ocean. He got nothing.

"He is a pro! We have a pro at work here!"

Xu Xiaoshou shrank back to his spot behind the pillar. He was immediately on high alert. He could tell with one look that there was something amiss with the young man. He must be a great Master who was concealing his cultivation.

Ye Xiaotian kept his eyes fixed on the blind man as he walked right up to everyone and finally stopped calling out for Dudu.

"Who are you?" asked Ye Xiaotian.

"Lei Shuangxing of the Holy Vassal."

The young man's voice was raspy yet pleasant and easy on the ear. It had the quality of sandpaper easing gently across your skin and felt strangely soothing.

An odd expression flickered across everyone's faces. The man had a badly scarred face. It was such a shame that the soothing voice belonged to a man with such a disfigured face, and many sighed in sympathy.

What a pity. Such a pleasant voice wasted on a face that looked like that.

"Lei Shuangxing?" questioned Qiao Qianzhi as he tried to recall where he had heard the strange name before. He looked surprised moments later. "Your last name is Lei. You are a member of the Lei family?"

The blind young man did not reply. He just stood there. He did not open his eyes but merely lifted his head, and everyone knew he was looking at Luo Leilei.

Luo Leilei looked miserable and had tears in her eyes. She looked like a young girl who had just caught sight of her elder brother after being bullied. She had an expression like she desperately wanted to tell her elder brother what had happened to her.

"I am here."

Those three simple words had the power to set her heart at ease. Luo Leilei nearly burst into a flood of tears.

Yu Zhiwen's lovely eyes filled with disbelief as she stared at the blind young man. "He is still alive?"

Ye Xiaotian and Qiao Qianzhi turned toward Jiang Bianyan. The latter thought for a long moment before sighing and replied, "Unless something unexpected happened, I believe he is."

The certainty in his voice made their eyes widen in alarm.

Yu Zhiwen staggered backward. Her eyes looked empty. The cold, merciless words that she had heard in her youth swept through her mind once more.

“The Lei family has been secretly plotting to claim Abyss Island for themselves. For their crime, we must destroy them!”

It had been more than a decade ago. Yu Zhiwen had been a child who had known nothing of the world. Held within her master’s arms, she had witnessed the true strength of Holy Divine Palace, the most powerful organization on the continent.

It did not matter that the Lei family had been a longstanding, semi-divine family. The simple order had led to their swift and utter extinction.

Those bloody memories had grown blurry with time. The only thing Yu Zhiwen remembered was some members of the Lei family had escaped death. But even though they had escaped with their lives, they were maimed or ruined for life.

The possibility that her childhood companion was still alive somewhere out there gladdened her.

But the appearance of the young blind man before her stunned her...

Yu Zhiwen stared at the face, badly scarred beyond the point of recognition. Her heart flooded with emotions, and she felt her head throb. With no warning, she clasped her head with her hands, and in a swoon, fell to the ground.

Jiang Bianyan reached out, using his internal energy, and steadied her. Then, in an instant, he appeared next to her and whispered, “Do not get caught up in the past. The Lei family conspired with demon beasts. They deserved what they got!”

“I understand,” Yu Zhiwen softly replied.

She grimaced and shut her eyes tightly. She pursed her lips, nodding—then her eyes were clear and bright when she opened them again.

Ye Xiaotian turned his gaze away from Jiang Bianyan and Yu Zhiwen. He had not expected to hear such shocking information from the Holy Divine Palace. But he did not wish to pursue the matter, for it was not the matter which concerned him the most at that point.

“I cannot believe the Holy Vassal has the temerity to even think of sending someone to the Spirit Palace again,” Ye Xiaotian said as he stared at the blind youth.

Lei Shuangxing tilted his head. His blank eyes looked like they were staring right back at Ye Xiaotian. His voice was calm when he spoke. “Why not?” he replied.

Ye Xiaotian froze instantly. Fury flashed across his face when he remembered how the masked man had effortlessly removed his arm.

He would have balked if it was the masked man who spoke in such a manner. But how dare the young man, at his level of cultivation, talk to him so brazenly!

“You think too highly of yourself. You are just a Master Swordsman!” Ye Xiaotian said.

A Master Swordsman?

Everyone froze for a moment. The blind youth possessed no cultivation at all. How could the young man be a Master Swordsman?

Xu Xiaoshou refused to believe that he had failed in his detection and scanned the young man with his Sense skill again. He appeared to be a Master Swordsman with no cultivation.

Something flickered across Xu Xiaoshou's face.

The young man must be an incredible prodigy to have become a Master Swordsman at such a young age. He thought of Su Qianqian—she might presently be a lot younger than he was, but no one could guarantee that her Sword Will would reach the Master Stage within ten years.

That was right! It was one's Sword Will and not one's cultivation that mattered!

One became worthy of the title of a Master Swordsman only when one possessed a Master Stage Sword Will.

It was then that Xu Xiaoshou realized why the blind youth could easily take down four Master Stage cultivators when he had no cultivation. He had chosen the path of Pure Sword Will Combat!

He might very well be the masked man's disciple!

Lei Shuangxing fell silent. He started feeling his way around again, tapping the tip of his cane on the ground as he moved. In front of him stood a group of law enforcers.

"Excuse me."

The others who heard him glared at him with sheer astonishment. The blind youth seemed to show no regard for the law enforcers at all! He had the gall to request that they let him pass through as if the place was his own!

"Stop right there!"

One of the law enforcers yelled at him. His voice quivered slightly.

Lei Shuangxing walked around him, passing him by, and walked right into the group of law enforcers.

Xu Xiaoshou was in awe and felt respect for the man. The members of the Holy Vassal seemed to know no fear at all!

But he should not be that bold, even though he was a Master Swordsman. His actions were tantamount to open provocation!

A mere Master Swordsman would not be a match for a Sovereign Stage cultivator whose wrath he had provoked.

Ye Xiaotian got mad. He held his hands out, intending to trap the blind young man with Shackles of the Abyss. But Lei Shuangxing was faster. He pulled a jade stone out of his robes.

What manner of attack was that? Did he plan to throw the rock at Ye Xiaotian?

Everyone stared in puzzlement as Lei Shuangxing crushed the jadestone in his hand. A pillar of sword energy surged into the sky, ripping the Heavens apart, before swinging toward Ye Xiaotian in a violent slash.

The move looked vividly familiar.

It abruptly distracted Ye Xiaotian, as the move instantly reminded him of the masked man. It was his sword energy!

Though the familiar sword energy the blind youth had unleashed was terrifying, it was significantly slower than one executed by the masked man. With a slight shift to the side, Ye Xiaotian dodged the sword energy which continued past him along its slashing arc.

The white sword energy continued striking relentlessly and surged toward the clouds. The Spirit Palace's array rippled into view as the blow landed on it.

Everyone laughed.

He was truly blind. He had missed his mark!

The next moment, the chimes of an ancient bell rang through the place.

Dong! Dong! Dong!

The smiles on everyone's faces froze. The chiming of the bell went on and only ceased after it hit seven times. It was then when everyone panicked.

The bell chimed seven times. It meant that a great enemy had arrived.

The blind man had no intention to hurt Ye Xiaotian with his sword. He used the attack to accomplish a task.

It was to send a signal.

Ye Xiaotian's ears twitched. A look of alarm appeared on his face.

It would seem Xiao Qixiu had requested help!

The man before him had not come alone. He had the Holy Vassal's bigwigs as his reinforcement!

"What do you want?"

Ye Xiaotian silently swore. The Spirit Palace was a small sect, but it seemed to be a repeated target of terrorist organizations such as the Holy Vassal. It was not a good feeling at all.

Lei Shuangxing steadied himself with his cane and stepped forward. There was fear and fury on the faces of the law enforcers as they gradually back away.

In response to Ye Xiaotian's question, Lei Shuangxing's voice remained calm, as if nothing in this world could faze or distract him.

"Nothing. I came to pick someone up."

Chapter 190: An Urgent Matter

He was here to pick someone up...

Ye Xiaotian's expression was inscrutable as he stared at Luo Leilei, who seemed moved beyond words, and thought to himself how impossible this was. He simply couldn't stand for this.

No one could tolerate his sect being intruded by the same group of ruffians twice in a row!

He turned toward Jiang Bianyan. "A high-ranking member of the Holy Vassal has attacked the Spirit Palace. He is at our gates. Hallmaster Jiang, we're counting on you."

Jiang Bianyan nodded. This was why he came to the Tiansang Spirit Palace. The favor he did the Spirit Palace today would soon come in handy.

He turned his gaze to Yu Zhiwen, looking somewhat hesitant. He couldn't let this young woman get involved in a fight between Sovereign Stage cultivators. If she were to get injured...

The astute Yu Zhiwen immediately understood Jiang Bianyan's concerns. "Hallmaster Jiang, please go ahead. I'll stay here."

She eyed the blind youth before her, then glanced at Xu Xiaoshou's scabbard. They were her top priority right now.

"Alright. Be careful."

Having gotten Jiang Bianyan's agreement to help, Ye Xiaotian turned to Qiao Qianzhi. "Hurry, lead Hallmaster Jiang to Xiao!"

"He needs both of us?" Qiao Qianzhi's heartbeat quickened. With Xiao thrown into the mix, they now had five Sovereign Stage cultivators prepared for battle. Did they have the masked man at their gates again?

"It's not the masked man. But the new arrival... is very strong!"

Ye Xiaotian frowned. He clearly knew what Qiao Qianzhi was thinking. However, judging from Xiao Qixiu's message, it appeared that he still couldn't tell who the latest intruder was.

But he knew the masked man well. Someone had convinced him to summon so many people to infiltrate the Spirit Palace. This somebody must be someone extremely dangerous.

"Let's go!" Qiao Qianzhi dared not dally.

"Hold on!" Ye Xiaotian said suddenly just as they were leaving.

The snowy-haired child seemed torn. He stared at the puzzled look on Qiao Qianzhi's face and finally said, "If necessary, deploy the array that you've been studying..."

Qiao Qianzhi's eyes instantly lit up.

"Are you sure?"

Jiang Bianyan was completely lost as he listened to the two speak in riddles. He eyed the middle-aged man who was constantly smiling next to him and suddenly smelled a hint of danger in the air.

Ye Xiaotian sighed in exasperation. "Try your best to protect our own. Don't blow everyone up!"

Qiao Qianzhi was seized by excitement. Seemingly worried that Ye Xiaotian might regret his decision, Qiao Qianzhi vanished instantly without a trace.

Jiang Bianyan froze.

"Go. Leave this to me." Ye Xiaotian's gaze fell upon the blind youth again. He could also see the masked man's shadow in the distance.

Where else was he going to be if not at the gates of the Tiansang Spirit Palace?

Would that old geezer Sang be able to hold the fort...?

Jiang Bianyan turned and left, and Ye Xiaotian returned to his fight with the blind youth. He was about to make his move when he caught the blind youth pulling another jadestone out.

Ye Xiaotian was speechless.

It struck him then. This was what the masked man had planned all along. He was going to have a mere master swordsman trap him, one of the Spirit Palace's most powerful fighters, in a fight while he attacked the Spirit Palace from another location.

What a crafty man!

"Release her," the blind youth said calmly.

"Don't be naïve!" Ye Xiaotian laughed incredulously. "Do you really think you can keep me here with that stupid little rock in your hand?"

"You're wrong..."

Lei Shuangxing shook his head and pulled out another jadestone. "It's two stupid rocks."

Ye Xiaotian found himself at a loss for words.

Xu Xiaoshou nearly laughed out loud. Deadpanned humor like this was the deadliest. The young man had a talent for making people fold over with laughter.

The dean's voice appeared in everyone's heads then.

"Fall back right now!"

This wasn't a fight that law enforcers should get involved in.

They'd been tasked with entering the Tianxuan Gate to conduct repairs on the world. Bumping into Xu Xiaoshou, who'd been tasked with the perilous task of planting the Sky Tree, was merely a coincidence. Their mission had then shifted to that of capturing the spies.

But they were useless when it came to fights between incredibly powerful fighters like Ye Xiaotian. Hanging around was only going to get them killed.

The blind youth might possess no spiritual cultivation at all, but as a master swordsman, he could easily crush multiple Master Stage cultivators.

They mustn't forget the jadestones in his possession too. Few of them would walk out of this alive if they tried to attack him rashly.

"Let's go!"

Xu Xiaoshou was overjoyed when he heard that he could finally leave. He might be able to control himself, but Jie couldn't for much longer.

It shook ceaselessly and with violent excitement underneath his clothes like a metallic ball that had come into contact with electricity...

The law enforcers began to disperse. But Lei Shuangxing wasn't going to let them go anywhere. They were the ones keeping him alive. Letting them leave was akin to suicide.

He thought hard. The floor began to shake loudly as gravel rose into the air. Countless sword energies appeared out of nowhere, flooding the sky with what appeared like a flood of blades as they surrounded the law enforcers.

A Master Stage Sword Will!

The law enforcers were trapped. The sword energy-infused gravel hovering in the air exuded a menacing Sword Will that could easily pierce human flesh.

"All Swords to the Master?"

Xu Xiaoshou was caught by surprise... He knew that move too!

During his battle with the grey mist figure in the Tianxuan Gate, he'd gained progress in his Sword Technique Expertise. As a result, through the stripping of a thousand trees, he could now form a complete understanding of the Great Path, and through the gathering of ten thousand leaves, he could form a sword.

It shouldn't take a lot of work to take apart the blind youth's trap.

He set aside his eagerness to take up that challenge and instead rushed toward Mu Zixi. This was an emergency. Finding a safe place to hide themselves should be their top priority.

"Hurry up! We need to get ourselves to the Spiritual Library Division!"

It appeared that few places in the Spirit Palace were safe now. The Spiritual Library Division should be one of them.

Perhaps Elder Sang was still in the Spiritual Library Division refining pills. With him around, the masked man wouldn't be able to kidnap Xu Xiaoshou, even if he managed to find him.

Mu Zixi leaned against the pillar and wouldn't budge. She looked like she was in great pain.

"What's wrong?"

"It hurts..." The young woman's eyes were shut tight, her face deathly pale.

Xu Xiaoshou froze. Why was she making things difficult for them in the middle of an emergency?

“What hurts?”

After a moment’s pause, he asked uncertainly, “Is it your tummy?”

Mu Zixi was speechless.

“Cursed, Passive Points +1.”

“My head!”

Xu Xiaoshou reached out and felt her forehead. It was burning. What was wrong with this young woman? She’d been fine a moment ago...

“Is there something wrong with your head?”

She was a spiritual cultivator. She should be immune to fevers!

Mu Zixi seemed to be in a world of pain. She cradled her head with her hands and appeared to have lost her ability to curse.

“Xu Xiaoshou, save me...ah!”

Xu Xiaoshou dabbed some honey on her immediately. He had no idea what was going on with Mu Zixi. The honey was the only thing he had on him that could possibly save her life.

He prayed that the Amber Juice could help with the fever...

“Hang in there! I’ll bring you to the Spiritual Library Division and to Elder Sang. He should be able to save you!”

He lifted Mu Zixi into his arms. The young woman was such a petite little thing. She hadn’t been able to walk straight in the Tianxuan Gate due to the snow and wind and she hardly weighed anything at all in his arms.

At that thought, Xu Xiaoshou pulled out the Spirit Mark of Life and, in a series of practiced moves, tugged her clothes open and shoved the spirit mark inside.

“Hang in there!”

...

The law enforcers were starting to panic. With Zhao Xidong and the four Master Stage cultivators down, they were suddenly left with no leadership.

No one could be bothered with what Xu Xiaoshou was doing. They were all busy trying to get out of the predicament they were stuck in.

The sword energy-infused gravel wasn’t something they could get around easily. It was as prickly as a porcupine. It remained still as long as they did, but as soon as they made the slightest move, it would stab them right in the face and make them bleed.

Ye Xiaotian’s white hair stirred slightly in the breeze as he stared at the numerous law enforcers lying on the ground, clearly enraged.

Had the blind punk no regard for his presence at all?

Before he could do anything, Lei Shuangxing spoke again. "I forgot. Our leader told me to deliver a message."

Ye Xiaotian scoffed. "What message?"

"Have you recovered from your amputation?"

Ye Xiaotian felt the spot where his arm had been severed throb with a phantom pain when he heard those words.

His finger joints creaked violently as he tightened his fists. His voice came out in a forced whisper, "Thanks for the concern. My arm's grown back. It can once again cut down the Holy Vassal!"

Lei Shuangxing laughed softly. "Our leader said to chop it off a second time if you grew one back."

"Hahaha!"

Ye Xiaotian burst into laughter, eyes were ablaze with derision. "I would take that as a genuine threat if he were here in person. But there's no one but you and your jadestones. What can you do?"

"Are you going to fight me blind?"

Lei Shuangxing wasn't angered. He calmly clutched the jadestone in his hand, ready to crush it any moment. "It can lock onto a target."

The hundreds of law enforcers present were dumbstruck. Did that mean... he'd targeted the Spirit Palace's array earlier?

This meant that he could hit anyone that he wanted, didn't it?

Judging from the strength of the earlier attack, the dean himself would find it a feat to counter it!

The sword energy-infused gravel around them suddenly unleashed a second wave of sword energy and sent the gravel sinking into the ground.

The next moment, a young man dashed past the Council Hall. He had a look of panic on his face and a young woman in his arms. He sped past Lei Shuangxing and dashed off, heading straight for the small path that Lei Shuangxing had taken.

"I'm sorry, I have an urgent matter to attend to. I'll make a move first. You guys continue talking."